



Latham Science Communication Project

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Sustainability and Urban Greenspace

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Project Narrative:

I choose to do this project because I had a great connection with Dr. Sander when I took a class (Contemporary Environmental Issues) with her. I was fascinated by her research, which focuses on that plant and animal species in urban environments and how human activity influences those populations and how those species can influence humans. I am very motivated by the environmental issues of our time, and I think urban greenspace is a way that nature can be incorporated into our everyday lives. My goal for the project was showcase urban greenspace at the University of Iowa and in the Iowa City community. I wanted to encourage people to take advantage of the parks in the area and provide a reason for residents to make use of urban greenspace in their everyday lives. I focused primarily on University of Iowa students, faculty, and staff for my audience. Since the student body is such a diverse group, discussing a wide range of benefits related to urban greenspace would hopefully strike a chord with different groups of people and embolden students to get outside and incorporate nature into the lives.

To implement the project, I interviewed Dr. Sander and we discussed a variety of topics related to urban greenspace. After compiling information from our interview, I gradually built a story that used a brick (dense information) and balloon (light, easy reading) style of writing to bring the 2000 word article together. I consulted with other Latham Fellows during the writing process to hear their feedback, critiques, and concerns. I also met with Richard Lewis, a science writer at the University of Iowa, and he was able to provide excellent commentary and insight into science writing and ways that I could improve my article in particular and writing in general.

For the video, I researched some of the ways that the parks in Iowa City related to different topics in sustainability, such as land revitalization, pollution mitigation, economic development, and environmental justice. I used a GoPro camera from the Engineering Library to record the footage, and compiled it together using iMovie software to create the final, 17 minute video. The Iowa Digital Engagement and Learning (IDEAL) staff helped decrease the camera and editing software learning curves. The video was uploaded to YouTube and it accompanied the article on the Stemosphere website.

Since the article and video were only recently published, there has not been sufficient traffic to the either to generate engagement analytics on the likes, shares, and engagements that the project has received.

In the future, students could build on this project and use it as a template from which to design a future project. Other students could follow a similar format, but perhaps with a researcher in a different field, to create a series of related projects that follow a common theme. Students could also use other types of media and different publication outlets to get the word out about their projects.

One lesson that I learned from the project was not to underestimate my capabilities. Since I had only limited experience with cinematography, speaking in front of a camera, and video editing, I was concerned that my video my not turn out as I envisioned. However, by consulting with IDEAL and doing online research, I was able to become confident with the iMovie software and produce a video that I was satisfied with.

Media:

Sustainability Certificate Final Project Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2eHdsrCr-tc>.

Pictures:

Video Cover Photo



The video cover photo featuring myself in front of the Old Capitol at The University of Iowa. The lawns surrounding the Old Capitol on the Pentacrest are buzzing with students studying, socializing, playing sports, and enjoying leisure time. On the steps of the Old Capitol, a class is in session.

College Green Park



College Green Park was one of the urban greenspaces that was highlighted in my video. It is an excellent example of an easily-accessible neighborhood park. My people live close to the park, so driving is not required to get there.